

The BANDWAGON

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A SEASON WITH

R. T. RICHARDS CIRCUS 1917

by

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Ithaca, N. Y.



Well do I remember when I was a boy and heard the magic rumble of the big red wagons, and saw the grand street parades, and the nomadic tented cities moved on to a vacant lot early in the morning. Then, performances afternoon and evening, and in the night moving to another town, repeating their gay routine day after day, during the tenting season. Showing in a different city was interesting to me.

My folks often took me to the circus, and when I saw the vast spreads of canvas, the crowds, the bands playing in the side show and big top, I thought what a grand life! Young as I was, I thought that some day I would travel with a circus, and as the years passed, I kept thinking that some day I would be with a show. So when I was 18 years of age, I joined the Sig Sautelles Circus (a wagon show), but that is another story.

During my career with circuses, with which I traveled for more than twenty years, there is one season that stands out in my memory more than any other, and that was the tenting season of 1917. In March of that year I placed an advertisement in the Billboard informing the show world that I would be at liberty for the tenting season of 1917. Among the replies I received was one with the letterhead reading: "R. T. Richards Supreme Show of the World," Great European Circus of Superb Novelties, Mighty Menagerie of Rare Wild Animals, Stupendous Spectacular Pageant, Immense New Museum of Strange Marvels, Gorgeous Free Street Parade, and Mammoth Imposing Horse Fair. New York offices--West 42th Street. The absolute perfection of all tented displays." So I signed contracts with the show to present the following in the side show: magic, Punch & Judy, ventriloquist act, and do the lecturing.

R. T. Richards was Richard T. Ringling, his name reversed so as not to conflict with the Ringling Brothers' Circus, which was operated separate from the Barnum and Bailey show at that time. Richard's father was Alf T. Ringling of the Ringling show and had a vast estate at Oak Ridge, N. J. I never saw it myself, but I was told that he had spent more than a million dollars on the estate. It had a beautiful stone mansion, and artificial lake, stone gate houses and arched horse shoe gates built of native stone. It was on this great estate that the R. T. Richards Circus was built, and was the winter quarters of the show.

The show traveled by wagon and had a few trucks at the opening of the season. The bandwagon was a truck with a tableau body having paintings on each side. A truck bandwagon was a novelty at that time. All cages and tableaux were wagons drawn by horses, and the parade was better and longer than that of a 15 car RR show. More horses were carried than a 15 car show would be able to transport.

(This story will be continued in the next issue)

Photos of the R. T. Richards Circus may be obtained from F. M. Farrell, 208½ Esty Street, Ithaca, New York. These will add to the enjoyment of this article.

--REMEMBER EVERY MEMBER GET A NEW MEMBER IN 1942--

"THE BANDWAGON"

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Vol. 1 No. 6

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March 1942

PAWNEE BILL'S HISTORIC WILD WEST--1894

(Notes by Don Smith)

As this copy was being written, we were notified of the death of Major Lillie, better known as Pawnee Bill, the White Chief of the Pawnees. Although little true information or photos are available, even from Major Lillie himself, regarding his early shows, these must have surpassed any of the more recent exhibitions, if we are to believe the lavish heralds and programs of that date.

Although most Wild West Shows were sadly lacking in parade equipment, Pawnee Bill, like P. T. Barnum, believed in presenting magnificent display free to the public on show day. The following list from his 1894 Herald gives some idea of his pageantry.--500 People and Horses in line. The Plains, the Prairie, the Pampas, and the Steppes represented. Indians, Squaws, Warriors, and Papooses. Guides, Hunters, Buffalo, Texas steers. Prairie schooners, Indian travoys, Mountain pack trains, Tally-ho coaches, oldtime Prairie Stages, Beautiful Western Girls & Handsome Indian Princesses, Australian Boomerang throwers, Senoritas from Mexico, Hindoo Fakirs, Artillery Companies of many flags. Mexican, Indian, and American Bands." There were five highly carved Bandwagons, and a Steam Calliope, and in addition a miniature Wild West drawn by 100 Shetland Ponies.

In later years, the Pawnee Bill title was combined with other shows, the most famous of these being the "Two Bill Show" with Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Great Far East, combined. However, it is doubtful if any later ventures surpassed the original Historic Wild West as presented by Lillie and his equally famous wife, regarded as America's premier lady rifle shot.

In closing, we doff our hat in deep respect to another of America's Famous Showman, who has joined the Big Parade to that sunny lot in the great beyond.

PART OF BARNUM'S CIRCUS WRECKED

Quoted from: THE GUELPH (Ont., Can.) DAILY MERCURY, of Sat. Aug. 24, 1889

Watertown, N. Y., August 23; (1889)

"The second train of the Barnum & Bailey shows was wrecked last night when about two miles and a half east of Potsdam, while enroute on the Rome, Watertown, & Ogdensburgh from Gouveneur to Montreal. A broken rail was the cause. Thirty-nine horses, including one of the four chariot teams, and two camels were killed. Six cars were derailed and two were telescoped so that everything in them was crushed. There is little hope of clearing away the wreck and restoring the track so that the trains can pass before this evening. Barnum's partner, Mr. J. A. Bailey is at the scene. He says it is difficult to estimate the loss at present, but it will be in the neighborhood of \$40,000. He thinks the loss of one day's receipts at Montreal will be about \$18,000, and some of the horses that were killed were valued at thousands of dollars each. The trick ponies that have attracted much attention, have suffered death in the accident, as did the \$7,000 stallion which was driven by Mrs. Adam Forepaugh. The pretty white mule, June, which also performed remarkable tricks, is among those lost. Seven of the chariot horses are also dead. Eleven men were taken out of one of the cars via the roof. There being no other way of egress for them, the roof was torn off. All the men were found uninjured." --Walter W. Tyson--

QUESTION & ANSWER--DEPT.

Tyson has a route card of the Arlington & Beckman Oklahoma Ranch Wild West, which covers period, July 6th to 25th. All western Canada dates. Does anyone have any information on the year, or other data on this show?

An early bandwagon of The Pawnee Bill Wild West had a design of three arches on each side. End arches were carved organ pipes, but center indistinct in an old view. Is anyone positive of this center design which might be Indian and Bear, similar to lion and gladiator? Requested by Don Smith.

Members. Now that you've been treated to a ride in the new BAND-WAGON let us know how you like the change from SPEC. Do you like this full size sheet, unfolded, or would you prefer it in book form, folded in center, as the cover design? Do you approve the items as written, or have you other ideas which may help to make the CHS and you publication more serviceable and enjoyable? Please also send in news of your activities for use in the Billboard column as only by proving that we have a large active membership, can we be assured of space in that paper. If the BB column does not appear each week it is because YOU have not sent in any news of interest. The CHS is under "new management" now. Let's all give the new President all the assistance he deserves to make our Society bigger, better, and more worth while. Every member get a member in 1942! The parade is starting!! Let's go! And many thanks to Fred D. Pfening, Jr. for so kindly assisting in printing this edition, and to all who contributed items for the Auction Column. If you have any duplicates in your collection, send them is, and help us grow. We want to buy a Bandwagon!

PARADE ORDER OF PAWNEE BILL'S WILD WEST IN DECATUR, ILL., AUG. 13, 1898

(As was reported in the DECATUR REVIEW at the date)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1) Girl bugler mounted | 10) Tally-ho with singers |
| 2) Detachment of U. S. cavalry | 11) Mounted cowboys |
| 3) Detachment of Cuban cavalry | 12) Mounted Mexicans |
| 4) Chinese in carriage | 13) Broncho ponies |
| 5) Cowboy bandon wagon | 14) Stage coach with band and Indian Squaws |
| 6) Pawnee Bill, mounted | 15) Cattle |
| 7) Mounted ladies | 16) Artillery (2 companies) |
| 8) Mounted Arabs | 17) Prairie Schooner |
| 9) Mounted Indians | |

--Contributed by Tom Parkinson, CHS of Champaign, Ill.--

BARNUM & BAILEY'S GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH--1898
(Notes by Fred D. Pfening, Jr.)

The season of 1898 saw the Barnum & Bailey newspaper advertisements using this phrase: "15-New United Shows in One-15". Then the ads went on to list the 15 different shows, many of which sounded like the same thing. Among the features were a Genuine Wild Moorish Caravan, A Tremendous Trained Animal Display, Two Monster Double Menageries of Rare Wild Beasts, a Mommoth Horse Fair with 380 horses, Marvellous Bicycle Riding Elephant, Grand Paris Olympia Hippodrome, and Great Free New Street Parade. All of these great features could be had for the one price of admission: adults, 50¢, children, 25¢. Interesting to note was a paragraph at the bottom of one particular ad, stating "Horses Wanted." These were most likely wanted to fill the places of those lost in the wreck described elsewhere in this issue.

"THE-AUCTION-COLUMN"

The following material has been contributed by members to be sold at auction and the proceeds to be given to the CHS, to further the historical interests and to obtain museum items from time to time, for exhibition purposes. Other items will be listed each month as received. Send bids to CHS secy, Jack Lyon, 22-A Charles Street, Guelph, Ontario, Canada. But hold money until advised of your purchase.

Ringling Bros. Herald (unusual 10x28) 1898--H. H. Conley

Portland, Maine TRANSCRIPT, May 24, 1873, containing fine 1 column ad of the P.T. Barnum Great Traveling Museum, Menagerie, and World's Fair, also a small write-up on Barnum himself. ---Offered by W. W. Tyson

National Geographic, Oct. 1931, with fine illustrated circus article by Kelley. Should be in every collection.--Tyson

6 Photos of Lemen Bros. Circus, 1897. Size $3\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$, showing parade and lot scenes.---Offered by W. W. Green, Jr.

Three Cole Bros. Circus couriers, including NY Hippodrome 1936 and 1935-7. All book type with gold covers, beautifully illustrated.--- Offered by Don Smith.

ALL BIDS ON AUCTION ITEMS SHOULD BE IN HANDS OF JACK LYON
BY APRIL 4, 1942

Throughout this issue you have seen the words " Every Member a New Member in 1942". Have you told all your friends about the CHS ? Have you been responsible for a person joining the CHS? The answer to both these questions should be yes. Is it yes.

Our new officers are going to really take up places. Do your part in making the CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY bigger and better than ever this year. This can only be done with the cooperation of every member.